



CADRE Quick-Look

Catalyst for Air & Space Power Research Dialogue



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Sky Cops

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Problem:

1. What role does the USAF have in Phase IV?
2. After the success of Air Power during recent wars, will the Air Force have a hard time justifying, maintaining, and/or increasing it's current major force programming levels?
3. What can the Air Force do to help bring the current Iraqi situation to a positive resolution sooner rather than later?
4. Can the Air Force better assist in border patrol and countering the flow of terrorists from one country to another and also aid in the war on drugs?

Discussion. We used to call the proud Airmen guarding our flight lines and their precious air assets, our bases and the front doors to the Air Force "Sky Cops." It is time for the Air Force to start developing a new "Sky Cops" capability. We have all heard the saying that goes something like, "When the Spectre flies, all the bad guys stay home, or go home in a box." The gun ship (AC-130, nicknamed "Spectre") provides the ultimate night surveillance platform with the added capability of massive and pinpoint kinetic weapons fire. Now think back to all the cop shows you use to watch. Remember two cops sitting in an unmarked car, staking out the bad guys and eating doughnuts? In effect, that is what the Spectre can do, and when the bad guys know they are in the sky, they tend to stay home. Part of the problem in Fallujah and other trouble spots in Iraq is the bad guys can operate with virtual impunity, unless the Spectre is in their area. There simply are not enough Spectres to cover all the hot spots in Iraq.

The Air Force must take the capability of the gunship, flatten it out to provide greater coverage, and add monitoring and recording capability. Communications gear capable of working with the entire spectrum of operators on the ground and various command and control entities is a must. The goal should be a smaller, less expensive airframe(s) and more of them.

The role of Sky Cop ties in extremely well with the air portion of the common operating picture (COP). The COP is a mosaic of individual intelligence and situational feeds pieced together to give combatant commanders and field operators greater visibility of the entire war picture. The Air Force is charged with providing the majority of the feed for the air picture. Sky Cops could provide more comprehensive and persistent coverage if they are fitted with the appropriate intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) equipment, to include low light TV's, Search and Rescue (SAR), and packages for cell phone intercepts.

Developing this capability has huge potential to eventually pay dividends in homeland defense. In addition to border patrol, the ability to provide airport surveillance and security services against potential threats like Man Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS) can be perfected.

Right now, the Air Force has a golden opportunity to test and develop this capability unlike any other time in history. To begin with, we have a testing ground where normal rules of society do not prevail. In Iraq, we have been applying air power in the urban environment in a manner that would never be politically conceivable to even test here in the US. There

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are also, by some counts, 10,000 insurgents volunteering to be live targets while the Air Force develops, tests, refines, and perfects this capability. Iraqi Reconstruction Funds could and should be used extensively to start up this program.

Recommendation:

1. Recognize that Sky Cops is a capability the Air Force can and should provide.
2. Find a low cost solution to provide the Sky Cop capability for future Phase IV operations, Homeland Defense, border patrol, and for the immediate future of Iraq.
3. Once the capability is refined, export it.

The Air Force must start building a combined research, development and training Sky Cop facility in Iraq. Send the brightest Army and civil policemen; forward air controllers; combat controllers; air to ground fighter pilots; homeland defense experts (to include the Department of Immigration and Naturalization Service for immigration and border patrol experts); and doctrine, training manual developers and writing experts to start up the facility. Develop doctrine on the fly. Get aircraft now, and then work on refining the weaponry and ISR equipment by applying it in the field and making adjustments as lessons are learned. Don't wait for the perfect aircraft, you don't have time. Procure several prototypes and test each one. Concentrate on several key capabilities like city patrol, border patrol, pipeline patrol, and high value asset (i.e., oil refineries) protection. Recommend missions be tasked with the sector FAC mentality employed during Vietnam. In other words, you want the same plane and crew operating in the same area, day after day and night after night.

Iraqis must be an integral part of the training program. All the aircraft initially purchased in direct support of this program and operated in the country of Iraq would be purchased with a "leave behind" mentality. They would eventually become part of the Iraqi Air Force inventory. There must always be an Iraqi Air Force member in each and every aircraft that ever flies. Specifically, the Iraqi sensor operator or weapons fire officer on-board the aircraft should be from the same area of the country and from the same religious sect as the majority present in the location where operations are being conducted. Besides the obvious advantages of knowing the terrain, locales, etc, this will help mitigate Shi'a on Sunni blood-feuds (or Kurd on Sunni, etc.) and the inherent targeting biases that come from pitting sect on sect.

Once the program is perfected the US Air Force, immigrations and homeland defense can then step in with programming requests.

Potential airframes to consider:

This is a perfect opportunity to jump-start AFSOC/XP's "modular gunship" or mini Spectre program.

The OV-10D, or a current rendition of same.

A gunship version of the C-23 Sherpa.